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ABSTRACT

Presented in this booklet are brief descriptions of programs and strategies designed and/or implemented to improve the quality of education in the suburban schools of Cook County (Chicago), Illinois. Some of the topics discussed include: (1) parent workshops; (2) driver education for the blind; (3) the C.E.T.A. Mature Job Opportunities Program (for people over the age of 40); (4) parent hotlines to help parents keep tabs on their children's homework assignments; (5) the Niles Family Service's school/community outreach program; (6) Glenview School's Primary Health Project implemented for the early detection and prevention of school adjustment problems; (7) a business management program; and (8) various reading programs. (EB)

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IDEA EXCHANGE

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS
IN COOK COUNTY
SUBURBAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Richard J. Martwick, Superintendent

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Fall, 1978

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Any article you submit will be appreciated and considered for forthcoming issues. Articles may deal with the concept, implementation or evaluation of any innovative educational program operating in Cook County. If you have an article you would like considered, please submit it to the Cook County Educational Service Region - Public Information Office.

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A special issue of IDEA EXCHANGE is being planned directed to the topic of discipline in the suburban public schools. If you have an idea, an approach, a concept, a set of guidelines that has proven successful, please submit it to us as soon as possible.

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PARENT WORKSHOPS

School District 109 - Bridgeview School
Paul A. Roberts, Principal, 496-7115

In an effort to reach out to community parents, the Principal of Bridgeview School sponsored a workshop to acquaint parents with unique problems and interests of the school, as well as gain their input and participation.

Their objectives were: 1) to help enhance a positive learning atmosphere for students; 2) to strengthen the bridge between the educational environment and the home environment; 3) to foster the school's movement into a leadership role in the community; 4) to promote and nurture between teachers and parents cooperative ventures that are fulfilling for both and have positive, constructive results; 5) to establish and encourage a positive professional image for the staff, as well as generate support for the school district in the community, and 6) to break with the "Pygmailion" effect regarding the image of the school and create a viable, expanding educational organization.

To do this, the support of the local PTA, as well as a core of teachers as change agents, was enlisted. An assessment was made to determine areas about which parents would be interested in learning more. The focus was to establish a commitment and obligation on the part of parents to participate in the workshop.

The workshop was planned to offer nine separate programs simultaneously during two consecutive sessions. Each session was limited to 15 parents.

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Speaker's assessment topics included: 1) When the School Cries Help! (a discussion addressing itself to the necessity, make-up, and procedures for referrals, the special assessment tools needed and their possible resulting individualized program); 2) What's Happening in Kindergarten? (a presentation centering on the general growth expectancies a parent can look for, nomenclature encountered in kindergarten reporting systems, and how parents can help create a positive educational system at home complementary to school); 3) What Can You Do To Help Your Child Read? (addressing itself to the needs and ways in which parents can fill a supportive role at home and create a positive home reading environment); 4) What's Happening in First Grade? (helping to develop an understanding of what parents can expect from their six-year old and how to help their child become a well-rounded individual, a myriad of primary curriculum areas were alluded to while providing the central theme of the first grader - growth in self-awareness); 5) What's Happening in Second Grade? (the curriculum and growth of the second grader); 6) What's Happening in Third Grade? (concentration was on the third grade curriculum and the eight-year old child); 7) What Do Report Cards Communicate? (an attempt to establish the purpose of report cards, their history and future expectations); 8) How to Gain Discipline and Respect (showing how discipline and respect interrelate, as well as what a parent may do to provide a mutually beneficial disciplinary structure at home for both child and parents), and 9) How Can You Create a Positive Pre-School Environment? (creating a positive pre-school environment by giving special attention to the selection and evaluations of nursery schools.)

In all presentations, the use of materials, handouts and visual aids were utilized.

DRIVER EDUCATION FOR BLIND STUDENTS

School District 214 - Wheeling High School
Mrs. Faye Greenspon, Special Education Teacher, 537-6500
Myrna Manners, Communications Specialist, Regional Service Agency, 679-7950

A teacher of the visually impaired in District 214 at Wheeling High School contributed this plan for integrating blind students into a class in drivers training. The philosophy practiced by District 214 maintains (in accord with Federal Law 94-142) that to a maximum extent handicapped children are to be educated with children who are not handicapped. The driver education course provides further mainstreaming for visually impaired and blind students.

In 1968, driver education was initiated as a "requirement" of the physical education program for junior students. Blind students were given study periods during the time when other students were having their drivers training. It was assumed that the visually impaired needn't know what takes place when someone is in the driver's seat nor did they require information as to how a car is set in motion.

Their teacher felt that blind students at Wheeling High School, when given the tools to work with, were academically and socially capable of absorbing all curricula offered to them.

With a full understanding that blind students were not being taught to drive on streets and highways, the course was proposed for approval by the administration, the coaching team of the drivers education program and the parents.

With their approval, three visually impaired students were enrolled in this program. Textbooks were transformed into braille and all other materials that were given to the class were brailled. At all times and for all assignments, they were part of the class. Tests and exams were given to the braillists in advance and the students were prepared to participate in all activities.

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These handicapped students were able to function normally by listening to the coach's instructions, while tactually locating parts of the dashboard as described by the instructor. The instructor corrected these students as he did the others when necessary.

Though silent films could not be seen by these students. enough discussion took place to enhance their awareness of what was being conveyed. On the driving range, these students sat listening in the car. Though sometimes frustrated, they gained much from these experiences. They did experience actual driving behind the wheel during individual instruction periods with their coach. The range was cleared. They were given directions to start, stop; start, turn right or left, and they were able to get the feel of driving. Blind students were educated to the mechanics of driving and the importance of care and consideration on driving. They became capable of correcting or suggesting safe handling of an automobile.

One year later, their driving coach was interested in seeing what they had retained. He took them out, on a clear range, in a different model car than the one they had used the previous year. He was pleased by their ability to follow directions and find the necessary instruments for operation of an automobile.

Some changes have been made in the simulator and in the driving experiences for the next class of blind students. All these students said they had learned a great deal about driving a car and all were capable of stopping a vehicle if they were alone in it.

C.E.T.A. MATURE JOB OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM

School District 117 - North Palos
Virgil Jordan, Administrative Assistant, Federal Funds
598-5500

The C.E.T.A. Mature Job Opportunities Program is designed to assist people over the age of 40 who have been out of the labor force for a period of time. It taps their resources to provide services for the school district in the areas of Clerical Aids and Custodians. While involved in this program, older adults can continue to utilize and refine skills they've acquired over the years. In addition, they can learn new skills that will provide them with supplemental income by obtaining jobs that will help them offset inflation. This is especially helpful to those on fixed incomes.

Currently, 14 mature employees are working part-time in the capacity of clerical aids and custodians. Clerical aids work in the district's schools and assist in the principal's office. Their duties include answering the telephone, typing, duplicating, and assisting in the day-to-day clerical work.

These employees also work in the psychology office assisting with general clerical work. At the district office, they are involved with computer print-out, attendance records and filing. They also assist with printing materials, duplicating, and general central office clerical procedures. One of the individuals works from 6:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. on the district office switchboard to answer early morning calls for teacher substitutes.

They are also employed as custodians, where they assist in the daily upkeep and maintenance of the school buildings. They also assist during lunch time in the cafeteria by emptying trash cans, cleaning up spills, and sweeping floors.

Another advantage of having older people in the school buildings is that students have the opportunity to associate with mature people which will enable them to enrich their lives.

CODE-A-PHONES

School District 26 - River Trails Junior High School, Mt. Prospect

Gene Kukla, Principal, 298-1750

A "hotline" for parents has been installed at River Trails Junior High School to provide parents the opportunity to keep tabs on their child's homework assignments for each class session.

Too often students forget, lose, or misplace their assignments. Additionally, the common excuse, "I did it at school" kept many parents unaware of their child's individual homework assignments. The school found telephone communication with parents inconvenient and mail communication unreliable.

The Code-A-Phone is a service initiated to remediate this problem - to check and insure parents these children are doing their assignments. Each child fills out a schedule card of his or her classes. The parent keeps his card on hand for easy reference. To become aware of the proper assignment, parents may call the "Homework Hotline Number" that corresponds to their child's core or group. (Core A, B, C, or D. Each core has its own telephone number.)

The Code-A-Phone appears to be a fool-proof system. After one ring, a message is given and then the system automatically shuts itself off for the next caller. This insures against any enterprising student from keeping the line busy all night.

Parents whose children are absent from a class session may call daily to keep up on the assignments, where applicable.

A tape is also used to inform parents of upcoming PTA meetings, bake sales, school programs, or information coming to them in the mail.

THE SCHOOL/COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM

Niles Family Service, School Districts 63 & 71
James Cisek, Director, 692-3369

The School/Community Outreach Program is a cooperative effort by the community schools in Niles and Niles Family Service to assist in the emotional growth and development of youth in their community. The program utilizes community resources, such as the Niles Family Service to work with schools for the common goal: helping youth learn how to better cope with life.

Niles Family Service provides personnel, materials, and an on-going consultation for schools. Three junior high schools in the area currently provide opportunities to work with their staff and volunteer students through release time and in-class activities.

Life education courses are stressed in the program. These represent an innovative approach to meeting the psychological needs of youth. Recognizing that many youths have a need to learn how to deal with life problems, the course content has been structured around four major areas for the pre-adolescent: 1) developing adequate social skills, 2) learning how to solve personal problems and resolve conflicts, 3) identifying values and life choices, and 4) learning how to handle stress and frustration.

Instructional procedures utilize role playing, guided discussion, workbooks, and films to assist in the learning process. Every student receives a certificate and poster at the conclusion of the course.

The personnel of the School/Community Outreach Program work with school faculty and parents to provide consultation and training programs. Other community organizations are being invited to participate in the program beginning this year.

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Many parents have become actively involved in the program which can help their children learn how to deal more effectively with life situations. A preliminary study of the program revealed that students who participated in the conflict management/ interpersonal problem solving class showed less psychological stress at the end of the course and more emotional control than a control group which did not participate in this class. Research into the effectiveness of the program will continue.

This program represents a commitment by the schools in the Niles community with the community, through the Niles Family Service, to help the children better prepare for their future---not only academically, but emotionally as well. It's a real service, not only for the schools, but for the community they serve.

PRIMARY MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT (PMHP)

School District 34 - Glenview Schools
Dr. William Attea, Superintendent, District 34, 724-7000

Glenview School District 34 has implemented a Primary Mental Health Project (PMHP), a program for the early detection and prevention of school adjustment problems. PMHP was originally developed in Rochester, New York. It identifies young children with potential social and emotional problems early in their school career and uses trained non-professionals as child aides.

The PMHP Program deals mainly with primary grades (K-3), since children in this age group offer the best possibilities for constructive help prior to school difficulties. The PMHP process starts with systematic detection of school adjustment problems in kindergarten and first grade students based on psychological screening, interviews with mothers by social workers, and rating measures for teachers' behavior.

PMHP deals with three basic groups of school adjustment problems: aggressive-disruptive behaviors, shy-withdrawn behaviors, and learning difficulties.

After a child's particular problem is identified, goals are set for each child. Under professional supervision, a child-aide works with the child on an individual basis and occasionally in small groups with other children. PMHP staffing conferences which include professionals, aides, teachers, and other relevant personnel are held to evaluate children's progress during and at the end of the school year. The PMHP staff provides ongoing consultation for school based professionals, aides, and teachers.

The PMHP model provides effective help to more children-in-need than is ordinarily possible in schools.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT IN ACTION

School District 211 - Hoffman Estates High School
David Pentz, Business Department, 882-8000

Students from Hoffman Estates High School's business management classes are now in charge of the school bookstore, which in the past has been operated by the school staff.

Several departments have been developed with management and employees appointed for each. Participation in a managerial capacity is a course requirement.

Four departments have been organized: merchandising, which handles inventory and the buying and pricing of merchandise; promotion, which handles all advertising; finance, which is charged with bookkeeping, both accounts receivable and accounts payable; and the cash register.

This operation has always been run on a non-profit basis. It will of necessity continue to do so on those items already in inventory. Such prices cannot be changed, due to contract restrictions. The new student management plans to change inventory as soon as possible and convert this business into a profit-making venture.

Some suggested new items of merchandise include posters, shirts, and materials from the art department, the last to be sold on a commission basis. Other items are necessary school supplies, i.e., art supplies, physical education and athletic equipment, including football and basketball T-shirts.

School regulations forbid personal gain by the students, so any profit which these classes make will be spent on the class as a whole, probably on a party at the end of school.

READING FOR ENJOYMENT

School District 111 - South Stickney
James V. Rokaitis, Assistant Superintendent, 496-0500

Every child, grades 1 through 8, in District 111's ten schools spends 15 minutes a day - Monday through Friday - reading for enjoyment. The children may read anything they wish: library books, magazines, books from home, school books, etc. Teachers may also read during this period.

Teachers do not assign any specific reading matter. This is totally non-school related reading. There are no reports and no homework. Children are required only to keep a record of what they have read.

The scheduling of the program is left to each school's principal with the only stipulation being that each child read each day.

The program was initiated in an attempt to upgrade children's reading, with the idea that many children will become engrossed in a story or with the concept of reading and will continue on their own, at times other than those prescribed. Indications show enthusiasm on the part of both teachers and pupils.

SAGE II READING PROGRAM

School District 219 - Niles Township High Schools
Lorraine Rubin, Director, SAGE II Program, 966-3800

Twenty students from each of the three Niles Township High Schools are receiving special assistance with reading and other language arts problems this year under a federal grant. SAGE II (Strengthening Academic Growth Effectively), funded under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Act, offers assistance to students who are critically deficient in reading and language skills. Many also have accompanying problems in attendance, discipline, or personal adjustment.

At East and West Divisions, the selected students, who are recommended by counselors and screened through the review board, are enrolled in a tutoring program in two groups of approximately ten students each. Three periods a week, these students are given assistance in reading and English. Once a week, they are involved in group or individual counseling with the Director.

At North Division, the counseling is provided by peer group counselors who were trained under the original SAGE Program.

All students in SAGE II are also enrolled in each school's reading center and close communication is maintained with the reading specialists, deans, teachers and parents of the selected students.

RAPID READING PROGRAM

School District 31 - Stanley Field School, Northbrook
Joyce Wagman, Director, Junior Rapid Reading, 272-6887

A program in Rapid Reading was introduced to the 8th grade class at Stanley Field School in the Fall of 1977. The eighth grade class consisting of 114 students was tested utilizing the Iowa Silent Reading Tests to obtain grade level equivalents for each student. Additionally, students read a 2½ page fictional story and answered multiple choice questions to establish an initial reading rate and comprehension score. Two reading levels were recorded for each student; one in a nationally standardized test (similar in format to text material or maximum responsibility reading), the other in fictional material for a reading rate and comprehension on fiction-type material. At the time of the testing, the goals and purposes of the program were also explained to the students.

The Junior Rapid Reading Program was taught to students during their social studies period. Students were instructed by Reading Dynamics teachers for regular 40 minute periods on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. The 11-week, 33-hour speed reading course was offered by the Evelyn Wood Reading Dynamics Institute.

The type of material used in class covered a broad spectrum of fiction, autobiographies, short stories, long readings or parts of books and textbook material. Books and materials varied from fifth grade difficulty level through high school level. The materials were varied according to the concept being presented and the level of the class.

Time was devoted to the teaching of mechanical skills: using the eyes, turning the pages, developing rhythm in moving the hand and eyes down the pages, along with rate acceleration. Comprehension and retention of material were embodied into the process at each stage.

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Overall, student achievement was outstanding. Before the course, the average reading speed of the 144 students was 240 words a minute. Upon completing the course, the students' average was 2,140 words a minute. Reading comprehension increased an average of 14 percent. Before the course, the eighth grade students' average reading level was grade 8.6 on the national standardized test. After the course, the average reading level was grade 10.9.

The goals of the School Board and the Administration in offering the Junior Rapid Reading Program to their students were parallel in concept to the goals of the junior course. The overall mutual objectives as presented and implemented followed these guidelines:

1. To develop a skill in reading that would enable their students to cover a greater amount of reading material in a shorter time span.

2. To develop a greater interest in reading, both in school and outside of school, that would enable the pupil to explore a wider range of subject material of interest to him or her.

3. To develop in the pupil an interest in reading that would cause him/her to strive for a greater range of accomplishment through reading.

4. To develop in the pupil a sense of self confidence in himself/herself and his/her reading ability.

5. To develop better skills and methods of study that would help the pupil to be a better student academically when he/she enters high school.

INFORMATION WANTED

A feature of IDEA EXCHANGE is "Information Wanted", your opportunity to obtain information from other educators in a specific area. If you have a question and don't know whom to contact, send the specifics to IDEA EXCHANGE. Through previous experiences or research, others may have the answers you are seeking.

The editors of IDEA EXCHANGE hope this will be a valuable and utilized addition to the publication.

Send inquiries to:

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